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Abstract

Explores the interaction of Masculine and Feminine principles (gender as opposed to sex) in Tolkien's Middle-earth, showing how the balance of the principles in a character is an important factor in his or her place in the struggle of good and evil, evil resulting in many cases from an imbalance of these principles.

Additional Keywords

Feminine principle in J.R.R. Tolkien; Gender in J.R.R. Tolkien; Jungian analysis of Irish mythology; Masculine and feminine in J.R.R. Tolkien; Masculine principle in J.R.R. Tolkien; Sex roles in J.R.R. Tolkien



The Feminine Principle in Tolkien

Melanie Rawls

One cannot acquire much insight into Tolkien's view of women from The Hobbit or The Lord of the Rings--too few women appear in these books, and none are pivotal characters. Of the women who appear in LotR, only Eowyn of Rohan is depicted in any detail of character, desire, motivation and activity. Arwen, Elrond's daughter, is a half-glimpsed dream. Galadriel is a mighty elven ruler, and we learn something of her thought and powers; but she is peripheral to the action and we learn little of her history and relationships. There are no female counterparts for Gandalf or Sauron, Aragorn or Saruman, Frodo or Gollum.

But open The Silmarillion. The feminine presence abounds and in such a manner as should satisfy any inquirer into the nature of the Feminine Principle as presented by J.R.R. Tolkien.

From the opening pages of The Silmarillion, it is clear that Tolkien believes that gender and sex are not one and the same; and that gender, or Masculine and Feminine, is a condition of the universe which goes deeper, higher and wider than sex, mere male and female and the necessities of reproduction. Through The Silmarillion runs this theme: in Arda and in the Heavens, the Feminine and the Masculine are present; when they are in equilibrium and in harmony, there is Good, but Evil is the result of an insufficiency or a disharmony of the attributes of one or the other of the genders. Concepts of Feminine and Masculine and their attributes and roles are thus tied to concepts of Good and Evil, and are therefore near the center of Tol-

kien's tale which is, after all, a tale of the struggle between Good and Evil.

Tolkien makes an explicit statement on gender on page 21 of The Silmarillion. He writes: "But when they clothe themselves the Valar take upon them forms as of male and some as of female; for that difference of temper they had even from the beginning, and it is but bodied forth in the choice of each, not made by the choice..."

According to Tolkien, Feminine and Masculine possess different characteristics which are meant to complement and augment one another. Attributes of the gender are not necessarily confined to the sex of the same gender, i.e. feminine attributes are not confined to females nor masculine attributes to males. The Macho Man, with his paucity of finer feeling and his neglect of thought in favor of action, is not admired in Middle-earth or Valinor. Neither is the Total Woman, with her wiles and dependence on males. Those beings in Arda who are able to achieve good either embody both Feminine and Masculine within themselves or have access to the nature of the other gender, usually in the form of a spouse, a sibling, or a mentor.

And it is an intricate dance, this complementarity--in the words of Mark M. Hennelly, Jr., a "rhythmic modulation of polar extremes, each of which...can realize itself only through interaction with its complement." (p. 4 "The Road and the Ring: Solid Geometry in Tolkien's Middle-earth" Mythlore, Autumn 1982, Vol. 9, No. 3.) This interaction is often simply stated, as in Tolkien's

description of the relationship between the Valar spouses Manwe and Varda: "...if Varda [demiurge of light, the medium of sight] is beside him he sees further than all other eyes...And if Manwe [the lord of air, the medium of sound] is with her, Varda hears more clearly than all other ears the sound of voices that cry from east to west..." (p. 26, *The Silmarillion*.) Or this interaction is stated more subtly, as it is in the development of Aragorn. In order to prove his fitness to reign, Aragorn must display characteristics feminine and masculine--the feminine power of healing, the masculine skill of wise and just rule.

What are these Feminine and Masculine traits or characteristics? Though, as I said earlier, characteristics of the gender are not necessarily confined to the sex of that gender, for the most part males display masculine traits and females display feminine traits. Careful attention to the personalities and activities of the inhabitants of Valinor and Middle-earth reveal a list of complementary masculine and feminine characteristics.

In Arda, the prime feminine characteristic is understanding; the prime masculine characteristic is power. Out of their understanding of the nature of the universe and its beings and things, feminines give counsel; out of their power, masculines act. Action without understanding is rashness; understanding without action is impotence.

FEMININE

(understanding)

Positive

love
counsel
intuition (insight
and foresight)*
mercy and compassion

Forms of Creativity

song, dance, healing,
weaving

Negative

impotence
passivity
consumptive or
devouring

MASCULINE

(power)

law
action
reason

justice

fine arts,
crafts, tech-
nology

rashness
aggression
self-
aggrandizing

The various positive traits derive, in general, from the prime characteristic. If understanding often results in mercy and compassion, the proper use of power results in justice. Justice, however, works best when tempered by mercy and compassion, and vice versa. Thus the dance of complementarity.

How does it come about, then, that few feminines, elf or woman, play prominent roles in the histories of Middle-earth?

The answer lies in a difference of modes of activity or influence, derived from the feminine attribute of understanding and the masculine tendency to action. This difference leads feminines to influence history in one manner while masculines influence history in another.

As Paul Kocher observes in his book *Master of Middle-earth*, Sauron and Shelob are both evil, yet are not allies but competitors. Observe the difference in their methods.

Shelob is totally self-involved. She has no interest in what happens outside her cave. Her goal in life is to devour all light and life that have the misfortune to wander into her lair. Unlike Sauron, she waits for her victims to come to her; she does not weave webs up and down the countryside or cast spells to lure travellers from a distance. She takes as little action as is possible. Gollum seems to be the only bait she ever uses, presumably because he is such an unappetizing meal himself and because he promises to bring her a better dish. Shelob is what happens when the feminine concern with the individual and with the inner life is taken to its extreme.

Sauron, on the other hand, is completely outer-directed. With a disastrous lack of self-understanding or respect for the natures of other beings, he seeks to make the world over in his own image. Consequently, he is very active in the world, affecting many lives; all of history. Sauron is what happens when the masculine predilection toward outer-directed activity is taken to the extreme.

Shelob is utterly private. Sauron is utterly public.

Thus the difference. The concerns of the Feminine Principle tend to derive from intuition: they are personal, specific and inner directed. The effect in history tends to be subtle, discernible in the variations of personality in individuals and not in the kind of action which is written in history books.

The Masculine Principle, being active and outer-directed, tends to be general and public, affecting the affairs of groups rather than individuals. Certainly this is what is written up in history books.

Another, more subtle, example of this difference in modes of action and effect can be seen in the fates of the brothers Boromir and Faramir in *LotR*. Boromir, the favorite of their father, is overbalanced on the masculine side: "Rather, he was a man after the sort of King Eanur of old, taking no wife and delighting chiefly in arms; fearless and strong, but caring little for lore, save the tales of old battles." (p. 419, *The Return of the King*, [emphasis added].) Boromir tragically lacks the feminine attributes of insight and understanding. It is no wonder that he is easy prey for the self-inflationary spell of the Ring.

Faramir, on the other hand, is his mother's son and is described as follows:

He read the hearts of men as shrewdly as his father, but what he read moved him sooner to pity than to scorn. He was gentle in bearing, and a lover of lore and of music, and therefore by many in those days his courage was judged less than his brother's. But it was not so, except that he did not seek glory in danger without a purpose. (p. 419, The Return of the King [emphasis added].)

Faramir's personality has a better balance of positive feminine and masculine attributes than does Boromir's, and he understands both himself and the false promises of the Ring. The fates of Frodo and Samwise and the possible outcome of the War of the Ring would surely have been different if Faramir had been more like his brother, or if he had been over-feminine, unable to take action when necessary.

In attributing the balance of Faramir's personality to the influence of his mother, we see how Finduilas of Dol Amroth affected history as profoundly did her husband Denebor, Last Ruling Steward of Gondor--but not as publicly.

We should note here that the "Tookish part" of Mr. Bilbo Baggins, Esquire, that brave, adventurous part of him that supported him through his trials, was said to be inherited from his mother, Belladonna. Curious--that a hobbit should be propelled from a creature-comfortable, self-involved inactive existence into an outer-directed, active rash life by the promptings of impulses inherited not from his father but from his mother!

Insight--self-knowledge and the ability to understand others--is a crucial trait for good. Melkor the Morgoth lacks it: "He had gone often alone into the void places seeking the Imperishable Flame...Yet he found not the Fire, for it is with Iluvatar (God)." (p. 16, The Silmarillion.) But that Iluvatar is also found within, Tolkien states elsewhere: "Manwe sat long in thought...and he sought the counsel of Iluvatar: ...Then Manwe said to the Valar: 'This is the counsel of Iluvatar in my heart...'" (p. 50, The Silmarillion.)

Morgoth, self-aggrandizing and outer-directed, seeks the power of creation--and power over creation--precisely where it is not: outside of himself.

Tolkien states that of all the Valar, Melkor feared and hated Varda most, presumably because of the clarity of her understanding of him, of his envy and possessive desire for all creation. "Out of the deeps of Ea she came to the aid of Manwe; for Melkor she knew from before the making of the music and rejected him, and he hated her..." (p. 26, The Silmarillion.)

Ages after, Galadriel displays the same ability to "see" into herself and into other persons. Her magic mirror of water "shows things that were, and things that are and things that yet may be." (p. 468, The Fellowship of the Ring.) She is able to see into Sauron's mind, though he is not able to divine her thought:

I say to you, Frodo, that even as I speak to you, I perceive the Dark Lord and know his mind, or all of his mind that concerns the Elves. And he gropes ever to see me and my thought. But still the door is closed! (p. 472, The Fellowship of the Ring.)

She tests all the members of the Fellowship with her glance, offering each his heart's desire should he relinquish the quest--and how could she do this if she had not the skill of instant and true perception into the natures of her fellow beings? When Frodo offers to surrender to her the One Ring, she answers him with great passion and a clear perception of the nature of the One Ring and he who wrought it; and with wise self-understanding:

"...I do not deny that my heart has greatly desired to ask what you offer. For many long years I had pondered what I might do, should the Great Ring come into my hands, and behold! it was brought within my grasp. The evil that was devised long ago works on in many ways, whether Sauron himself stands or falls. Would not that have been a noble deed to set to the credit of his Ring, if I had taken it by force or fear from my guest?

"And now at last it comes. You will give me the Ring freely! In place of the Dark Lord you will set up a Queen. And I shall not be dark, but beautiful and terrible as the Morning and the Night! Fair as the Sea and the Sun and the Snow upon the Mountain! Dreadful as the Storm and the Lightning! Stronger than the foundations of the earth. All shall love me and despair! ...

"I pass the test...I will diminish, and go into the west, and remain Galadriel." (p. 476-7, The Fellowship of the Ring.)

The wise counsellors of Arda are often females or the proteges of females. Melian, Galadriel and Idril all function as counsellors--though they are sparing in their advice-- "...advice is a dangerous gift, even from the wise to the wise, and all courses may run ill. ..." says the elf Gildor Inglorion, when Frodo asks for his counsel. (p. 123, The Fellowship of the Ring.) All are careful to avoid coercing the will of other persons. One of the signs that Boromir is falling under the spell of the ring is his increased airing of his opinions and his presumption in offering advice.



Gandalf, who was Olorin in Valinor, is a student of the feminine Vala Nienna of whom, it is said, he learned pity and patience.

Healing, song, dance and weaving are the feminine modes of creativity and power. The Vala Este is known as the Healer. Nessa, spouse of Tulkas and sister of Orome the Hunter is said to delight in dancing. The great singers of Valinor and Middle-earth are females of great power: Yavanna, the personification of nature, who sang the Two Trees into existence; Melian, who sang for the Valar during the mingling of the light of the Two Trees before departing to Middle-earth; and Melian's daughter Luthien, whose song of power brought down the walls of Sauron's stronghold, whose song of enchantment overcame even Morgoth in the heart of his realm, and whose song of grief moved the heart of Mandos to pity, doomspeaker of the Valar "who never before was so moved, nor has been since." (p. 187, *The Silmarillion*.) Luthien was also a great healer, and often healed through her song.

All creation came into being because of the power of song, as is told in the *Ainulindale*. That God, Eru Iluvatar, uses song as His primary mode of creation signals that the Feminine Principle lies at the heart of all creation and has done so from the beginning. Eru is both feminine and masculine: omniscient--all knowing--and omnipotent--all powerful.

Note that with the exception of weaving, all the forms of creativity of the Feminine Principle involve action of the body or the Self, rather than manipulation of objects. Tolkien seems to be saying that the Feminine Principle finds creative expression in activities of the body--no bad description of childbirth.

The best of the males of Arda display these feminine traits. Beren and Tuor, heroes of the First Age, were singers. That the young dwarves Fili and Kili were less susceptible to hoard-lust is demonstrated by their preference for gold and silver harps rather than jewels in Smaug's hoard. Later on in the story, Tolkien says that they alone may have stood on Principle against Thorin's refusal to share the prize with the elves and the Lakemen: they are of superior character, and a clue to this may be their love for music.

Elrond is both healer and counsellor--in fact, the peculiar passivity of his daughter Arwen, the near invisibility of his sons and the absence of his wife may be attributed to the femininity of his nature. Elrond has no need of a complementary feminine, for his nature embodies those traits most feminine.

Rivendell bears all the marks of a place of the Great Mother archetype. Hearth-centered, all travelers find within song, rest, healing, understanding, and those creature-comforts provided by the best of mothers. It is situated in a hidden valley through which runs water, a common description for paradisaical or mother-archetypical spots.

Elrond's sons represent what action he does take in the world beyond Rivendell--and that is very little. Elrond is the best example that attributes of the gender are not necessarily confined to members of the sex of that gender.

Contrast Arwen's relationship with her father, Elrond, to Idril Celebrindal's relationship to her father, Turgon. Turgon has also lost his wife, but Turgon is very masculine and in need of a feminine counterpart. His daughter Idril plays this part. While Turgon rules Gondolin--making laws, dispensing justice, preparing for war, all outer-directed, masculine activities--Idril sits at his right hand and counsels him. Idril, too, is noted for her intuition: she senses from the beginning that something is not quite right about her cousin Maeglin. Idril is also capable of taking action (masculine trait) after achieving understanding. Because of her suspicions of Maeglin, she causes a secret route out of Gondolin to be constructed which, during the sack of Gondolin, saves many lives. Idril is a well-balanced personality; and Tuor, who also combines masculine and feminine traits as a counsellor and a warrior, matches her well.

Elrond, of course, is not wholly feminine. The center of his house is the Hall of Fire--and fire is a masculine element. At the heart of all creation is a flame, Eru's Imperishable Flame; and this Fire achieved all creation through the medium of Song. In Elrond's Hall of Fire, Frodo succumbs to the enchantment of fire and song and walks in dreams made real. Again Tolkien subtly reiterates the interplay of the Masculine and Feminine Principles.

Sauron is a horrible parody of this masculine/feminine interplay. By the Third

Age, all that is visible of Sauron is a Hand and an Eye. According to Mark Hennelly and Marion Perret (see notes at end), the hand and the eye are part of the Tolkien dialectic and interplay for good or evil, as when "the hand and the eye of Legolas" (p. 502, The Fellowship of the Ring) guide the arrow which destroys a Nazgul's steed; or as with Gollum who seems to be all bulging, gleaming eyes and strangling hands. It is simple to deduce that the eye motif is feminine that the hand is masculine. Eyes perceive, hands act.

But Sauron's feminine Eye is entirely outer-directed (masculine) and behind is nothing:

But suddenly the Mirror went altogether dark, as dark as if a hole had opened in the world of sight, and Frodo looked into emptiness. In the black abyss there appeared a single Eye that slowly grew, until it filled nearly all the mirror....The Eye was rimmed with fire, but was itself glazed, yellow as a cat's, watchful and intent, and the black slit of its pupil opened on a pit, a window into nothing. (p. 470, The Fellowship of the Ring.)

Sauron's black hand is entirely occupied with possessive clutching of the world. In the end, when the One Ring is destroyed, Middle-earth is treated to a last view of Sauron:

And as the Captains gazed south to the Land of Mordor, it seemed to them that, black against the pall of cloud, there rose a huge shape of shadow, impenetrable, lightning-crowned, filling all the sky. Enormous it reared over the world, and stretched out towards them a vast, threatening hand, terrible but impotent... (p. 279, The Return of the King.)

Impotence is one of the negative feminine traits.

Impotence is a peculiarly feminine failing. Most of the weak or wicked feminines do not so much as actively participate in evil deeds as they are powerless to initiate any deed, much less halt an evil act. Two examples of this failing are Tar-Miriel, last queen of Numenor, and Aredhel, Turgon of Gondolin's sister.

Tar-Miriel is unable to prevent her cousin Ar-Pharazôn from usurping her throne. She is unable to prevent him from forcibly marrying her. Her end is the ultimate in impotence for she is overwhelmed by the great power of the sea and drowns. Tolkien gives us a picture of a very beautiful yet ineffectual female, and if we pity her fate we are also impatient of her helplessness.

Aredhel's fate is somewhat more complicated but still involves an interplay of

masculine and feminine traits which, nevertheless, end in impotence.

To begin with, Aredhel is rash (masculine)--she takes action without understanding. Against good counsel she leaves Gondolin, then rashly decides to change her road and ride in perilous country. She is then ensnared by Eol, who more or less coerces her consent to marriage. She manages to corrupt her son Maeglin with her dissatisfaction, which leads directly to his fatal covetousness of Turgon's kingdom and Turgon's daughter, his betrayal of Gondolin and his ignominious death. Meanwhile, Aredhel herself has died, unable to prevent the execution of her husband. She is powerless, but nevertheless has managed to precipitate others into actions both harmful and evil.

Aredhel's unbalanced masculinity leads to a negative-feminine end--impotence. Totally outer-directed Sauron also ends in a negative-feminine manner, becoming "a mere spirit of malice that gnaws itself in the shadows." (p. 190, The Return of the King.) He, like Ungoliant, is self-consuming: "Yet some have said that she ended long ago, when in her uttermost famine she devoured herself at last." (p. 81, The Silmarillion.)

We may accept that Ungoliant is the inverse of Melkor: he totally outer-directed, she completely inward-oriented. According to the speculations of the Eldar, when Melkor first looked down on Creation with his outer-directed envy to possess and rule, down clambered Ungoliant from the outer darkness with her inner-directed compulsions to consume all existence.

Now, Eowyn of Rohan is a female character of masculine habit. How, then, does she escape the fate of Aredhel?



Primarily because Eowyn's life has been shaped by events, over which she has little control, rather than by her character. She is trapped in a web of negative-feminine circumstances: confined to the house and tied to an uncle who has given over his masculine prerogatives. How significant that Theoden has put away his sword, that phallic symbol, and has sunk in impotence and inactivity upon his throne. His ears are filled with the whispers of Wormtongue, a servant of that hypermasculine personality, Saruman. Eowyn is denied her place as her uncle's counsellor and is forced by other circumstances to stand by passively. Theoden's negative-feminine behavior has nearly consumed her life.

To achieve equilibrium, she must take a positive masculine action. Being only human, she overcompensates, disguises herself as a male, and rides off to that preeminently male activity, war. However, on the battlefield, it is love, a feminine attribute which motivates her and gives her the power to act--again, an interplay of feminine and masculine attributes.

She falls in love with Faramir, who wins her through feminine tenderness and understanding, and not through his masculine prowess as a warrior. Wise and kind Aragorn knows that this is what she needs; he is aware all along that she is originally drawn to him for all the wrong reasons--for his warrior magnificence and his worldly position. Faramir embodies, in a male, those positive feminine characteristics lacking in her life. For Eowyn to have wed a warrior, a Boromir-type, for example, would have settled her permanently in an overly masculine environment. She would then have lived out her life as a "wild shieldmaiden of the North" or been thrust back into a confined and passive life--impossible to imagine

Boromir accepting counsel or assistance from a wife, or allowing her to live a life as anything other than his appendage.

On the walls of Minas Tirith, intuitive Faramir helps Eowyn to new self-understanding.

And she said: "I do not wish to play at riddles. Speak plainer!"

"Then if you will have it so, lady," he said, "you do not go, because only your brother called for you, and to look on the Lord Aragorn, Elendil's heir, in his triumph would now bring you no joy. Or because I do not go, and you desire still to be near me. And maybe for both these reasons, and you yourself cannot choose between them. Eowyn, do you not love me, or will you not?"

...Then the heart of Eowyn changed, or else at last she understood it. And suddenly her winter passed, and the sun shone on her.

"I stand in Minas Anor, the Tower of the Sun," she said; "and behold! the Shadow has departed! I will be a shieldmaiden no longer, nor vie with the great Riders, nor take joy only in the songs of slaying. I will be a healer, and love all things that grow and are not barren." (p. 229-230, The Return of the King.)

Eowyn elects to remain in the Houses of Healing until time to return to Rohan. Obviously she has embraced the feminine principle in its positive aspects, including healing and the bearing of children, and has laid aside the frenetic activity of masculine warriors. She is no longer driven to rash acts, nor will she be consumed.

The Feminine Principle shapes individuals. The Masculine Principle shapes events. But as individuals are shaped by events, so are events determined by individuals--there is no escape from the complementarity of these polar principles.

Feanor is another example of how the imbalance of one of the gender principles leads to a fate which typifies an imbalance of the polar principle, a leading, as Carl Jung says, to enantiodromia--"conversion to its opposite." (p. 152, Four Archetypes)

From the beginning Feanor was consuming (a negative-feminine trait) rather than giving (a positive, outer-directed, hence masculine trait). His mother Miriel died of his birth, telling her husband as she expires, "Never again shall I bear child; for strength that would have nourished the life of many has gone forth in Feanor." (p. 63, The Silmarillion.) It is as if, having consumed the Feminine Principle in the form of his mother, Feanor overbalances toward the masculine. Feanor was preeminently a Maker: artist and technician. At first he heeded the counsels of his wise wife Nerdanel who,



writes Tolkien, desired to "understand minds rather than master them." (p. 64, The Silmarillion). His masculine hand and feminine eye augmented one another, (for Feanor was also noted for his powerful insight into his fellow beings). The palantiri are an example of this: round shapes created by the hand to aid the eye in Seeing.

But Feanor grows progressively more masculine. He becomes estranged from his wife. He becomes possessive of his father and jealous of his public place and prerogatives as the son of the king of the Noldor. His feminine eye is made subservient to his masculine hand and he becomes more out-directed and less introspective. He loses the ability to read accurately the intentions of his half-brothers.

His greatest work, however, reflects his basically consumptive nature. For the Silmarils, significantly, imprison the light of the Two Trees, that is, keep inward the light which the Trees radiated outward.

The basically negative-feminine Feanor suffers a negative-masculine end. Rashness on the battlefield results in a sorry death in the very first battle with Morgoth.

For Feanor in his wrath against the Enemy would not halt, but pressed on...he was fey, consumed (my emphasis) by the flame of his own wrath...he drew far ahead of the van of his host;...Feanor was surrounded...but at the last was smitten to the ground... (p. 107, The Silmarillion.)

The notion that wives, sisters and mothers influence society by influencing their mates, siblings and children, is a Victorian notion generally rejected these days because it is seen as a pretext for denying women power in the public sector. Tolkien appears to view the situation from a different perspective. His feminines wield power within their sphere, and masculines wield power within their own. The societies of Arda are patriarchal, but Tolkien appears to desire this to be attributed to the masculine talent for public affairs, rather than to general masculine superiority coupled with feminine weakness and passivity, the rationale given for male dominance in our public arenas. The treatment of feminines with anything less than respect and a notion of equality in diversity is, in Arda, a signal of things going wrong.

Thus, we may interpret Aredhel's flouting of her brother Turgon's authority as the improper use of a blood relationship to obtain a privilege denied others, rather than the rebellion of an undisciplined female against proper male authority.

Tolkien frowns upon forced marriages, an arrangement wherein an alliance between the masculine and the feminine is coerced, usually for reasons of public policy. The Akallabeth, the tale of the downfall of Numenor,



tells of the Lady Inzilbêth who was compelled to wed the Numenorean king Gimilzôr; her eldest son and the one she influenced became Tar-Parlantir, the wise, far-seeing king who attempted to redress some of the harmful acts of the rebellious Numenoreans. But her second son, who took after his father, was the discontented rebel Gimilkhâd. Gimilkhâd's son was Ar-Pharazôn, who also forced marriage on an unwilling woman, usurped the throne and brought about the downfall of Numenor. Great evil usually comes from these forced marriages, as Eol, Aredhel's reluctantly taken husband, learns to his cost.

Tolkien's treatment of wives also differs from the usual Western treatment in which a wedding ring converts a woman from a highly desirable individual (or love object) to a household fixture. The great lovers of Arda marry, and maintain beautiful romances ever after.

The romance of Elwing and Earendil is an example of this. The Silmarillion contains this Tennysonian passage:

...but Elwing with the Silmaril upon her breast had cast herself into the sea.

...Ulmo bore Elwing out of the waves, and he gave her the likeness of a great white bird, and upon her breast there shone as a star the Silmaril, as she flew over the water to seek Earendil her beloved. On a time of night Earendil at the helm of his ship saw her come towards him, as a white cloud exceedingly swift beneath the moon, as a star over the sea moving in strange course, a pale flame on wings of storm. And it is sung that she fell from the air upon the timbers of Vingilot, in a swoon, nigh unto death for the urgency of her speed,

and Earendil took her to his bosom; but in the morning with marvelling eyes he beheld his wife in her own form beside him with her hair upon his face, and she slept. (p. 247, The Silmarillion.)

Further on in the tale their devotion to each other is again expressed.

Then Earendil, first of living Men, landed on the immortal shores; and he spoke there to Elwing and to those that were with him, ... And Earendil said to them: "Here none but myself shall set foot lest you fall under the wrath of the Valar. But that peril I will take on myself alone..."

But Elwing answered: "Then would our paths be sundered for ever; but all thy perils I will take on myself also." And she leaped into the white foam and ran towards him;... (p. 248, The Silmarillion.)

Other devoted couples are Hurin and Morwen, Gorlim and Eilinel, and Melian and Thingol.

In terms of power and creativity, the feminines of Arda are the equals of the masculines and sometimes surpass them. Two of the greatest works of Ea are the creations of feminines: Varda's stars and Yavana's Two Trees. Among several couples, the wives surpass their husbands in power: Melian and Thingol, Luthien and Beren, Galadriel and Celeborn. In the cases of Melian and Luthien, however, their power is intimately bound with their lovers.

For Melian was of the divine race of the Valar, and she was a Maia of great power and wisdom; but for love of Elwe Singollo she took upon herself the form of the Elder Children of Iluvatar, and in that union she became bound by the chain and trammels of the flesh of Arda. In that form she bore to him Luthien Tinuviel; and in that form she gained power over the substance of Arda, and by the Girdle of Melian was Doriath defended... But now Thingol lay dead, and his spirit had passed to the halls of Mandos; and with his death a change came also upon Melian. (p. 234, The Silmarillion.)

Luthien achieves feats of greatness for love of Beren, just as he is impelled to deeds far beyond the power of mortal men for love of her. Both escape the Curse of the Silmarils because they are prompted in their actions by love for one another, rather than hoard-desire for the Silmarils.

The curious history of the creation of the Dwarf and Ent races demonstrates what happens when the masculine and feminine crea-

tive powers, while not in opposition, are, nevertheless, not quite in step. It is also of course, a tale of the uneasy relationship between nature and technology.

Aule created the dwarf race without the knowledge or aid of his spouse Yavanna. Consequently, dwarves are very masculine: absorbed by handicrafts, war-like, sometimes just, but not particularly compassionate. They also suffer a shortage of females, as if Aule forgot that a race needs mothers as well as fathers! They are possessive, a negative-masculine trait.

When Yavana discovers Aule's secretive activity, she is not pleased. She observes that his creations will have little love for hers because no thought of hers went into their making. She then seeks out Manwe with a request that some protection be provided for the plants and animals which were her contribution to Arda. Ents are the result.

Ents like dwarves, are somewhat one-sided. They remain in their forests and have little to do with other races--rather self-involved, as Treebeard admits to Merry and Pippin. They practice few of the masculine crafts of making--fine arts, handicrafts and technology. In fact, their only craft appears to be the brewing of special draughts for consumption and the making of their homes. A bad Ent or huorn is like Old Man Willow or Shelob--rooted to one place, voracious, and contenting himself with corrupting the immediate environment and luring individuals to destruction. "Don't be hasty," is a motto of the Ents--a warning against the masculine fault of rashness.

Ents also have a sexual dysfunction within the race. For the males are wandering herders while the females are settled gardeners, and the two genders go their separate ways, pursuing their different interests (echoes of Aule and Yavanna!). Neither sexual attraction nor the necessities of procreation are sufficient to arrest this gradual drift apart. Nature devises a unique method for the continuation of the Ent race--but a method which does not involve sexual congress between males and females.

Note that throughout the entire incident, Yavanna's work is considered as important as Aule's.

All in all, Tolkien's treatment of females and the Feminine Principle is much more flattering than the treatment commonly accorded them. In most fantasy and science fiction, women are cast in subordinate or antagonistic roles. Recently, this situation is changing, due to the influence of the women's liberation movement and to the influx of female writers into the field. Yet all too often the heroines of modern fantasy and science fiction are simply males in drag. They are given swords and guns (phallic, masculine implements of the hands) and sent out on warrior-sagas. They are no different in motivation, activity, reaction and basic character from the male warriors.

The sexual activity of these "liberated" Amazons--meaning liberated from the direct control of men--has taken on some of the worse aspects of our macho male characters: unrelated to bonding or procreation, and exploitative, serial and random. This is enantiodromia with a vengeance.

In short, too many writers appear unable to conceive of how females can be distinct from males without their also being subordinate to, an appendage of, or in competition with males. The presence of women raises serious questions: Who is woman? What is woman?

The easiest way to avoid these questions is to avoid the presence of females altogether. The "heroes in drag" staunchly maintain the perspectives that masculinity is the norm and the standard, that all things of value belong to the masculine sphere and that we shall all be equal once we are all converted to males.

Thus is the Feminine Principle denied, and women are diminished.

But such an arrangement diminishes males as well. This is the monochromatic world sought by Sauron, the "clamorous unison" of Morgoth's music. (p. 17 The Silmarillion). The negation of the harmony arising from cooperative diversity leaves us with one-dimensional, repetitive, stereotypical characters and situations.

We may look to Tolkien for one answer to the question of "Who and what is feminine?" For his Feminine Principle is not the negative of the Masculine Principle, but is another kind of being, equal yet other, in stature and power. This diversity adds dimension and complexity to his characters, as they dance the dance of complementarity. Compare your Conans and Conans-with-bosoms to Beren and Luthien or Aragorn and Eowyn. Who stirs the heart most or holds the imagination longest?

Is Luthien mannish? No. Without recourse to such masculine apurtenances as swords or rayguns, she nevertheless outperforms in courage, daring, resourcefulness, adventure and sheer power most of our weapon-brandishing heroes and heroines. Her deeds are masculine--active and outer-directed--but her methods are not, and she has not been turned into a male.

Is Elrond effeminate? No. He embodies characteristics we most often associate with females, for he is hearth-centered, intuitive, caring and introspective. Yet we know Elrond is a match for any he-man type who comes along, for he is neither passive nor ineffectual, characteristics also commonly associated with femininity. He is a powerful, respected figure in Middle-earth histories.

There is no war between the sexes in Tolkien's subcreation. Complementary and mutually augmenting positive feminine and

masculine qualities are set against enantiodromic, negative feminine and masculine qualities. Feminine and Masculine are diverse--not subordinate nor antagonistic to one another. Tolkien shows how this is to the greater glory of each.

NOTES

In his essay "The Road and the Ring: Solid Geometry in Tolkien's Middle-earth," (Mythlore 33, Autumn 1982, pp. 3-13.) Mark Henelly discusses the dialectic of the Road and the Ring, recurring motifs in The Lord of the Rings. He makes reference to the essay of Marion Perret entitled "Rings Off Their Fingers: Hands in The Lord of the Rings." To their observations I add my dialectic of the Feminine and Masculine Principle: the Ring, and other rings, are feminine, and the Road is Masculine.

...The Road provides action, the Ring provides contemplation. The Road is an aggressive offense; the Ring is a protective defense, a posture of rest and recovery....The Road focuses its attention on the present, the Ring on understanding and remembering the lessons of the past and planning for the future. (p. 5.)

...Each is a necessary complement to the other; and someone falls to evil, like Sauron and Saruman, only if he selfishly seeks to destroy the dialectic itself...(p. 4.)

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*Note: the intuition of which Tolkien so often speaks would be termed clairvoyance (lit. clear-sight in our modern world. The best of the people of Middle-earth and Valinor display this talent--Frodo, Aragorn, Elrond, Galadriel, Gandalf, Faramir. Visions of past and future events or events occurring somewhere else in the present come to Frodo and Faramir in dreams. Aragorn, Elrond and Gandalf foretell the future. They express this in terms of what their hearts tell them (not their reasoning minds, note) such as when Aragorn warns Gandalf that to pass the door of Moria may be fatal for him, or when Gandalf tells Frodo that "My heart tells me that he [Gollum] has some part to play yet, for good or ill, before the end..." (p. 93, The Fellowship of the Ring.)